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RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA PRIORITY 0002
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RHMFISS/USCENTCOM SPECIAL HANDLING MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEAORC/US CUSTOMS AND BORDER PRO WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIRUT 000562

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SUBJECT: LEBANON: GOL SHOWS GREAT INTEREST IN MEGAPORTS
INITIATIVE

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Classified By: DCM William Grant for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) The Lebanese government has been supportive to date in responding to the offers under the Department of Energy's Megaports initiative to provide radiological/nuclear materials detection equipment in Lebanon's two largest ports, Beirut and Tripoli. However, GOL bureaucracy and some specific questions from the Beirut Port Authority may delay the signing of an MOU currently scheduled for May 9. End Summary

2. (C) During their April 7-10 Megaports outreach visit to Lebanon, two Department of Energy (DOE), National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) representatives met with GOL officials from the Customs department, the Atomic Energy Commission, and the Beirut Port Authority. They also toured the Beirut and Tripoli ports.

CUSTOMS SUPPORTIVE
OF MEGAPORTS

3. (C) General Director of Lebanese Customs, General Assad Ghanem, told the Megaports team that he fully supported the Megaports project's implementation in Lebanon. Ghanem said he looked forward to Customs officials receiving this important training in the detection and prevention of the illicit trafficking of nuclear materials or weapons. He is grateful for the Megaports equipment and training, which will enable customs officials to detect radiological material in scrap metal (Lebanon's main export) before the scrap arrives to Europe. In the past, shipments have been returned to Lebanon after European ports have detected radiological scrap. This amounts to about a \$100,000 a day cost for Lebanese exporters.

4. (C) Ghanem said there were two items within the MOU which needed GOL inter-agency approval. The first is a clause

which states that the USG should be notified if any illicit nuclear material is detected by the Megaports equipment. The other item is a request by the GOL which would specifically limit the time in-country for USG personnel working on the project. Ghanem said the MOU was now in the hands of the Ministries of Defense and Interior.

NATIONAL RESPONSE PLAN
TO NUCLEAR ATTACK

15. (C) Dr. Bilal Nsouli, Director of the Lebanese Atomic Energy Association, told the delegation that the GOL needed to develop a national response plan for any potential nuclear, biological, or chemical attacks or accidents. Currently, the GOL does not have such a plan in place. However, Nsouli said a National Response Committee was established in November 2006 that is composed of representatives from Lebanese Customs, the Internal Security Forces (ISF), the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), including the LAF'S G-2 Intelligence Directorate, and the Atomic Energy Commission. The purpose of the committee is to develop guidelines on the inter-agency roles and responsibilities in response to a nuclear attack or accident. A plan would also impact the Megaports project by outlining how the GOL would respond if any hazardous nuclear or radiological material was found entering Lebanon.

16. (C) Nsouli said this committee would develop a legal and regulatory framework for establishing storage and security regulations for hazardous radiological materials, training for first responders, and a national response plan to such incidents. The committee, with the help of the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA), is currently identifying other key GOL stakeholders, such as the Ministries of Health and Environment, in order to ensure that all inter-agency incident responders are represented on the committee.

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17. (C) Nsouli believes the GOL lacks basic resources, such as the proper equipment to transport hazardous nuclear or radiological materials, as well as proper storage facilities for radiological materials. (Note: Currently radiological items are being stored in the Atomic Energy Commission's basement. End Note.) According to Nsouli, the Megaports project will only be fully successful if the GOL manages to iron out these important procedural protocols.

POT DISCUSSIONS
AND ONE GOL SKEPTIC

18. (C) In contrast to other GOL contacts, Mr. Hassan Kraytem, Chairman of the Beirut Port Authority, appeared to be extremely skeptical of the project. Kraytem's main concern was avoiding congestion or any construction that may slow down port operations. Kraytem said until he received word from his superior, Minister of Public Affairs and Transportation Mohammed Safadi, he would not be willing to proceed. Charge briefed Minister Safadi about the project on April 16. After the briefing, he indicated he has no objections. We believe that the Port Authority will be willing to discuss the impact of Megaport on port operations.

19. (C) In contrast to Kraytem, Mr. Ammar Kanaan (AmCit), the CEO of the Beirut Container Terminal Consortium (BCTC), the port operator, was fully supportive of the project and even arranged for the Megaports team, DCM, and Poloff to tour the port. Kanaan said that even though he manages the day to day operations of the port, Kraytem is the official GOL representative for port oversight because the GOL continues to own the property. Therefore it will be important to bring Kraytem and Safadi on board for any future Megaports developments.

110. (C) The Megaports team also visited the Port of Tripoli

and met with a number of GOL officials. Megaports has expressed interest in possibly equipping the Port of Tripoli with similar equipment. The Tripoli-based officials were enthusiastic about this proposal which would help their smaller and less developed port.

FURTHER U.S.- EU
COOPERATION IN LEBANON

¶11. (C) The Megaports team also met with officials representing a project jointly sponsored by the European Union and International Atomic Energy Agency to provide similar material and equipment at Lebanon's four land borders, as well as Lebanon's two smaller ports in Sidon and Tyre. The EU/IAEA team were enthusiastic about the Megaports initiative and will work with Megaports to coordinate the training of Lebanese customs officials.

COMMENT

¶12. (C) The GOL seems quite willing to implement the Megaports project in Lebanon. However the MOU signing, currently set for May 9, may slip given the internal GOL inter-agency clearance process of the MOU. In addition, we have to address the Port Authority director's skepticism, which may be less of a problem now that his Minister has approved. End Comment.

¶13. (C) Attached is a list of key interlocutors for this program:

U.S. Participants

Tracy Mustin, NNSA, Office of Second Line of Defense Director
Michael L. Bedke, NNSA, Megaports Initiative Middle East
Regional Manager
¶C. Jasen Peterson, Political Officer, U.S. Embassy - Beirut

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Lebanese Participants

General Assad Ghanem, Director General of Lebanese Customs
Mr. Hassan Honeini, High Council of Customs
Mr. Talal Itani, Regional Director for Port of Beirut
Major Pierre El-Hajj, Head of Maritime Division of Lebanese Customs
Dr. Bilal Nsouli, Director Lebanese Atomic Energy Commission
Mr. Hassan Kraytem, Beirut Port Authority Chairman
Mr. Ammar Kanaan CEO of BCTC
Mr. Elias Mekari, Regional Director for Port of Tripoli
Major Hussein Sherry, Head of Customs Brigade for Port of Tripoli
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